'Alarm Bells Over the CIA Investigator'

The February 9 Evans and Novak article, "Alarm Bells Over the CIA Investigator," which attacked Senator Church's selection of William G. Miller as staff director of the special committee investigating the CIA, was a piece of bare-faced hatchet journalism, and sloppy in the bargain. A calculated attack on Miller that tried to sound as though it were based on hard-won evidence, it was in fact based on a flimsy tissue of gossip from carefully unnamed sources, reinforced by resort to emotion-laden words ("cabal," "absolute disaster"). A close reading of the article revealed that not a single Republican senator on the CIA investigating committee (not even Senator Tower) is known to have voiced any opposition to the Miller appointment, but the writers sought to convey the quite opposite impression that all sound-thinking elected sons of the GOP are pressing alarm bells.

Why? Apparently because Miller, a man who worked with his then boss, Senator Cooper, to defeat the ABM, is known to favor reduced defense expenditures, and even had the temerity several years ago to doubt the wisdom of keeping American forces in Vietnam for the remainder of this century.

But such views are very much in the mainstream of moderate Republicanism in the Senate--a fact reflected by the article's reference to Senator Baker's expressed lack of opposition to the Miller appointment (and his comment that he has heard of no opposition from his colleagues). This however is an awkward truth for Evans and Novak, and they tried to stamp it out by attributing Baker's position entirely to his presidential ambitions. All in all, a sad piece of intellectual legerdemain from a pair of journalists from whom higher standards are expected.

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